

Marine Tactical Aviation

Discussion

The expeditionary nature of Marine aviation allows it to operate effectively across the full spectrum of basing options. Marine Tactical Aviation (TACAIR) squadrons deploy from conventional airfields when available, from aircraft carriers and amphibious ships as seabased airpower, and in the absence of adequate runways, the Marine expeditionary airfield system provides the capability to rapidly construct stand-alone airfields to support forward based TACAIR operations.

The ability of Marine TACAIR to integrate with, and reinforce, naval operations is well documented. Marine squadrons deployed aboard aircraft carriers in World War II, the Korean War, and during Vietnam. Today, every MEU(SOC) Composite Squadron includes AV-8Bs, while four Marine F/A-18 squadrons are currently integrated with navy carrier air wing deployments. Marine squadrons operating as part of navy carrier air wings or off amphibious ships have more recently participated in operations such as Operation Allied Force, Restore Hope, Deny Flight, and Deliberate Force.



Marine TACAIR assets not assigned to support shipboard deployments maintain the capability to do so. Marine TACAIR squadrons operate as an integral part of the MAGTF. During the early days of Operation Deny Flight, Marine TACAIR responded within 48 hours of the deployment order. In keeping with its expeditionary nature, Marine TACAIR will continue to maintain its aviation forces in a high state of readiness. The capability to task organize and deploy assets aboard ships or to expeditionary land bases located anywhere in the world within 72 hours of notification, will remain the Marine TACAIR standard.

Marine Corps participation in Kosovo, once again, validated its ability to task organize into a MAGTF while providing a responsive and credible warfighting capability. From forward-deployed Marine Expeditionary Units to Special Purpose MAGTFs, organic aviation assets combined to make a mobile, rapidly deployable and highly versatile force. Operating from two different air bases in Italy, an austere airfield in Taszar, Hungary, and from amphibious ships at sea fixed-wing aircraft commenced combat operations within days of arrival into the EUCOM area of operations. Marine rotary-wing aircraft operated from both ships at sea and a Forward Operating Base (FOB) in missions ranging from humanitarian assistance to close air support. Marine TACAIR has been, and will continue to be, ready to deploy an expeditionary task organized, air-heavy MAGTF capable of the full spectrum of TACAIR missions in Joint and Coalition environments to both existing airfields and austere locations.

Marine Corps Position

Air support to the MAGTF commander remains the primary mission of Marine aviation. Units scheduled in support of MAGTF elements must be trained to a level of proficiency that satisfies the MAGTF commander. Each Service brings unique capabilities to joint warfare that when integrated under joint doctrine improves service interoperability and overall warfighting effectiveness.